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"THE RAIN IT RAINETH EVERY DAY"

From "Twelfth Night."

By permission of Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton.

From the original drawing in the possession of Mr. W. A. Hofmann

W. HEATH ROBINSON

BY

A. E. JOHNSON

CONTAINING MANY EXAMPLES
OF THE ARTIST'S WORK IN
BRUSH, PEN, AND PENCIL

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4, 5 & 6 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

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PREFATORY NOTE

In commencing the issue, under the title of "Brush, Pen and Pencil," of the series of books of which the present volume forms part, the publishers felt that they were meeting a demand which had long existed but had not previously been supplied, and the reception accorded to the earlier volumes indicates that their opinion was correct. There is good reason to believe that the opportunity of obtaining in permanent form some record of the work of the leading men amongst contemporary artists is welcome. Such an opportunity is provided by the present series; and it is hoped that in the volumes composing it the public will have pleasure in finding representative examples of the work with brush, pen and pencil of the men whose skill and fancy have from time to time delighted it.

PREFATORY NOTE

For permission to reproduce some of the pictures by Mr. W. Heath Robinson, which appear in the present volume, the publishers wish to acknowledge the courtesy of Messrs. Constable and Company Limited, Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, Messrs. George Bell and Sons Limited, Messrs. J. M. Dent and Sons Limited, Messrs. Alexander Moring Limited, Messrs. Chatto and Windus, Messrs. Doubleday, Page and Company, of New York, the Management of the Alhambra Theatre, and the proprietors of *The Sketch*, *The Tatler*, and *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*.

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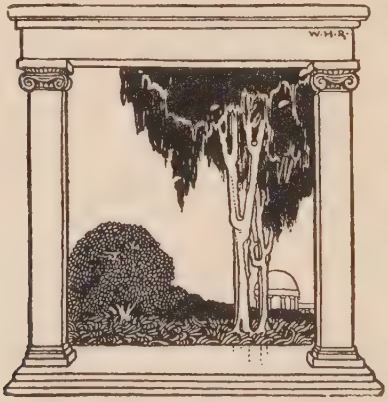


GREAT BRITISH INDUSTRIES

Stiltonising Cheese in the Stockyards of Cheddar

By permission of the "Sketch"

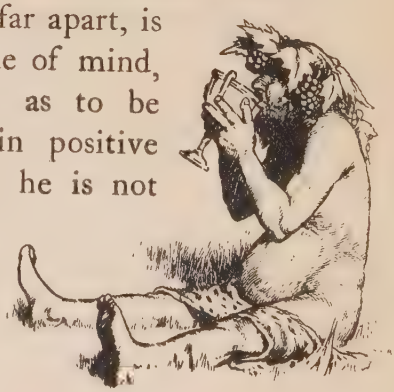
W. HEATH ROBINSON. I.

IT is not unusual, as other volumes in the present series have shown, to find considerable variety in the work of artists who contribute to the Press. It is a feature to be expected, for apart from the varied, and sometimes fickle, taste of the wide public to whom appeal in this manner is made, the Press encourages the employment of so many different media that it would be strange if fertility of resource were not developed in the artist.

But it is seldom that such versatility is to be noted as that of Mr. W. Heath Robinson, who possesses not one, but two or three distinct professional reputations. As a general rule there is little difficulty, no matter how numerous the veins of fancy which an artist exploits, how diverse the channels into which he directs his energies, in detecting a salient feature common to all that he does: some trick of technique, some phase of humour or other mental

attitude. A certain continuity of method and idea may be observed in Heath Robinson's work, but it is manifested only with some subtlety, and superficially there appears little relationship between the various aspects of his illustrative art. His sombre embellishments of Edgar Allan Poe seem to have as little in common with the wild absurdities of his comic invention as the coarse grotesquerie of his drawings for Rabelais with the delicate fantasy of those for "Bill the Minder" and other gentle tales.

The connecting link, the common factor, is there, but it is scarcely obvious. Here and there, sometimes in the most unlikely places, one may recognise a peculiar turn, as it were, of the wrist, but that which underlies all the artist's work and reconciles extremes which are seemingly so far apart, is rather a curious attitude of mind, so vague and elusive as to be difficult of definition in positive terms. He is not this, he is not that, he is not the other; and one is tempted to put



FRONTISPIECE TO "BILL THE MINDER"

By permission of Messrs. Constable & Co. Ltd.

the result of such an eliminating process in a riddle and declare that the artist's main purpose is to be purposeless. Such a comment, however, would be not more fair than lucid, for few men set about their work with more deliberate purpose and intention. The point is that the purpose is not very clearly apprehended ; the aim is general rather than precise, and the goal allures not least because it is enveloped in a pleasant haze and is not too certainly located.

FROM "THE POEMS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE"

If I possessed the art of caricature, and were in a mood for mild satire, I should portray Heath Robinson as a gentle, amiable child, straying (with mouth and eyes wide open) through a world of commonplace wonders, admiringly observant of all about him—the

odd shapes of trees, the whimsical cadence of the song of birds, the droll habits of perfectly respectable human persons—and vaguely conscious of a hidden significance in things which he does not attempt to probe: picking a random path through his enchanted garden towards a goal, dim but desired, upon the further side: not quite sure whither he is going, or why he is going, but quite determined to get there (wherever it may be), and by a route of nobody's choosing but his own.

Or one might picture him as a new version of the White Knight of Looking Glass Land, not less inventive and ingenuous than Alice's immortal companion; not less full of purpose to purposeless ends. The peculiar note of Heath Robinson's humour is the note of all his work, though in some aspects of the latter it is well concealed; and from this, perhaps, arises the success with which he appeals to a public as varied as it is immense. His imagination is of a quality which offers safe conduct;

MASTER PETER

Illustration from "Don Quixote"

By permission of Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.

it goes far enough to seem adventurous, but not so far as to become dangerous. "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—but I don't exactly know what they are!" "Jabberwocky" is a minor classic, and Heath Robinson bids fair to become another.

THE SHOWER
From "Uncle Lubin"

FOLLOW AFTER WE ARE WAITING BY THE TRAILS THAT WE LOST

From Rudyard Kipling's "A Song of the English"

[illegible]

W. HEATH ROBINSON. II.

THE artist crops out often enough in the most unlikely places, but Heath Robinson has family traditions which predestined him. He came into the world with a pencil in one hand and a brush in the other, as another is said to be born with a golden spoon in his mouth. His grandfather was Thomas Robinson, an artist and engraver of the time of Bewick, with whom he had personal associations. His father was Thomas Robinson the younger, also an artist and engraver, who for very many years was the principal artist on the staff of the old *Penny Illustrated Paper*, in the brilliant days of that once famous journal: and his uncle was Charles Robinson, an artist whose work was well-known at one time to readers of the *Illustrated London News*. He himself shares the inherited family ability with his brothers T. H. Robinson and Charles Robinson, both well-known among modern illustrators.

Heredity, obviously, had much to say in the matter, and environment probably still more. It would be an interesting essay in criticism to analyse the distinctive methods of Heath Robinson and his brothers and show how the several factors which the work of these three artists, so diverse in other respects, share in common, is attributable to the influence of a bygone generation, exerted during impressionable years, if not actively at least passively, by sheer weight of persistent example.

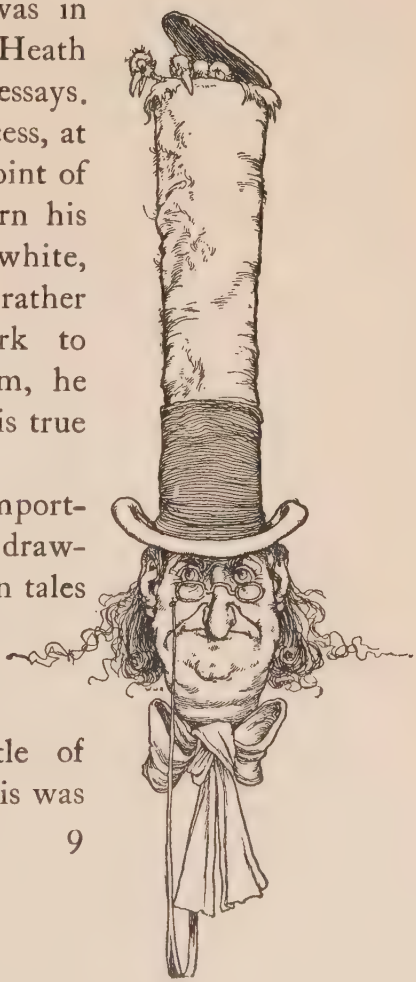
Whatever the force of tradition and environment, Heath Robinson owes very little to academic schooling. Such artistic training as he had began at a small art school in the north of London. Subsequently he frequented the British Museum, where he made drawings from the antique ("a dreadful practice," in his own opinion), while at the same time studying from life. In due course he obtained a studentship

LANDING AN ANCHOVY AT THE WELSH HARP, HENDON

By permission of the "Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News"

at the Royal Academy schools, but whatever advantage, or otherwise, this might have been to him, was lost through the necessity of early beginning to earn a livelihood.

It is curious to think of an artist whose work is ordinarily conceived in so fanciful and often humorous a vein, as a painter of landscapes, but it was in this direction that Heath Robinson made his first essays. Comparative lack of success, at least from a monetary point of view, obliged him to turn his attention to black-and-white, and in this medium, or rather in the illustrative work to which it introduced him, he soon began to develop his true bent.



The first book of any importance for which he made drawings was a series of Indian tales for children collected by Mr. W. H. D. Rouse, and published by Mr. Nutt under the title of "The Giant Crab." This was

followed by a collaboration with his brothers Tom and Charles in the illustration of an edition of Hans Andersen's Tales published by Mr. Dent. That publisher has always displayed a *flair* for budding artistic ability, and the work of the brothers Robinson which for a time was issued in various forms from his house, attracted no little notice.

Heath Robinson's contributions to the Hans Andersen volume, however, were of minor interest as compared with those of his more experienced brothers. His work at this period, including the illustrations to "The Giant Crab," and a large number of drawings which he contributed to an elaborate edition of the "Arabian Nights," issued by Messrs. Constable, are interesting rather for their revelation of that quaintness of invention, fantastic turn of humour, and oddity of interpretation, which are characteristic of the artist in every phase, than for their sureness or facility of execution. The drawing from the "Arabian Nights" which is reproduced on page 12 illustrates this point. The instinct for the bizarre, not

"TOMLINSON"

"Now Tomlinson gave up the Ghost in his House in Berkeley Square,
And a Spirit came to his Bedside and Gripped him by the Hair."

From Rudyard Kipling's "COLLECTED VERSE."

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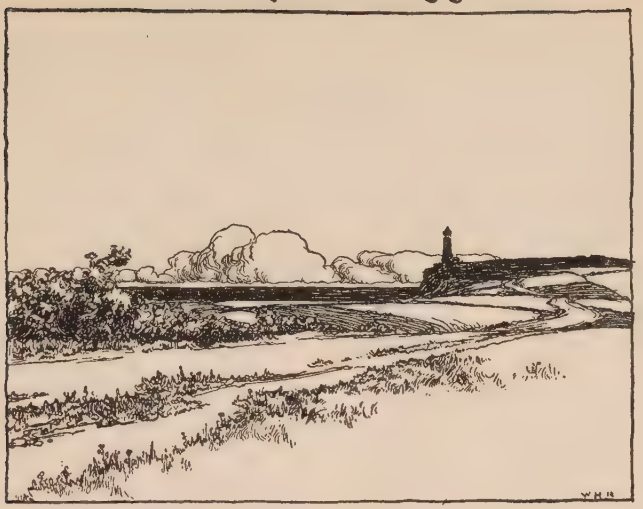


ILLUSTRATION FROM "A SONG OF THE ENGLISH"

only in subject but in treatment, the determined adoption of a novel and curious standpoint, are not less apparent than the tentative experimental spirit in which the artist has handled his medium.

An interesting point in Heath Robinson's development as an illustrator is marked by his drawings for the Edgar Allan Poe volume in Messrs. Bell's "Endymion" series of poets, published a year or two after the books just mentioned. These drawings, of which examples are reproduced on pp. 13, 24 and 40, show the acquisition of much confidence in

"THE MAGICIAN SET THEM ON FIRE . . . AND THREW IN SOME INCENSE"

From "The Arabian Nights Entertainments"

By permission of Messrs. Constable & Co. Ltd.

"WHERE AN EIDOLON NAMED NIGHT
ON A BLACK THRONE REIGNS UPRIGHT"

From "THE POEMS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE"

By permission of Messrs. Geo. Bell & Sons Ltd.

the use of the pen, and indicate that strong instinct for decorative treatment which is to be noted in all the artist's work, not excepting the most frivolous and irresponsible of his comic inventions. But most interesting, perhaps, is the exhibition which they afford of the artist's qualities and defects as an interpretative illustrator.

Without claiming for these drawings exceptional merit, and recognising that they by no means represent the best which the artist now or in the future might achieve, one may admire the attempt which they embody to convey a sense of the poet's mystic vision, of the strange and vast imagery which he evokes. Rightly, one feels, the artist has endeavoured, even when the achievement falls short of his intention, to interpret with decorative and harmonious line the exquisite music of the poet's verse. Where the illustrator fails, as usually happens, is in the difficult task of embodying the essential literary motive and idea. One cannot say that he

"ETON *v.* HARROW"

A New Version of a famous Cricket Match.

has plucked the very heart out of the poet's verse and impaled it, so to speak, upon the point of his own draughtsman's pen. The defect is one which Heath Robinson shares with most illustrators, whose natural instinct is to concern themselves with the pictorial possibilities afforded by the author's context, rather than the elucidation of his central (and purely literary) idea. In so far as, in these drawings, the defect in question is obscured by the mysticism and vaguely defined imagery of the poems, it may be said paradoxically to be revealed. The fact that writings of such distinctive and peculiar qualities as the poems of Poe should have appealed so strongly to the artist's sympathies appears significant.

The next stage in Heath Robinson's career as an illustrator is represented by his drawings for "Don Quixote," published by Messrs. Dent. The series shows again a marked advance in mastery of technique, and displays also the characteristic tendency to experiment with new methods. As pen drawings these illustrations for

"Don Quixote" show a remarkable diversity from the decorations for the poems of Poe, as will be seen by a comparison of the several examples of the latter reproduced in the present volume, with the drawing of Master Peter on p. 5.

Yet another stage is marked by the long and elaborate series of drawings for the monumental work of Dr. Francis Rabelais, which were originally published in two massive tomes by Mr. Grant Richards, but have since been issued in more convenient shape by Messrs. Alexander Moring Ltd. This was a task, projected by himself, into which the artist threw himself with the greatest zest. The result was a large number of pen drawings which are not only interesting as exhibiting another and striking phase of their author's personality, but claim attention upon their own merits. Rabelais presents obvious difficulties to the would-be illustrator. It needs courage, in the first place, to tackle such a colossus: and if the artist begins by rejoicing in the wealth of the material which is offered to him, it is more than likely that its superabundance will presently be his despair. To pick from out of that tumbling torrent

THOUGHTFULNESS; OR TAKING MOTHER'S PLACE

From the Original Drawing in the possession of Mr. W. Pett Ridge

By permission of the "Sketch"

ILLUSTRATION FROM "A SONG OF THE ENGLISH"

an incident here and a character there would be as if one were to take a dozen "snapshots" of Niagara and think to have photographed the Falls. Moreover, when such initial misgivings are overcome or ignored, the difficult problem arises of where to draw the line. The notion of drawing a line at all where Rabelais is concerned may well seem humorous; but it is at least probable that a too sympathetic interpretation would cause commotion in the modern lending libraries!

On pp. 20, 21, 35 and 51 will be found reproductions of four cartoons from Heath Robinson's bold attempt. The originals of all the drawings in this series are upon a very large scale, which made possible the coarseness of method which the artist purposely adopted for the broad treatment of his subject. Apart from the manifold opportunities with which the illustrator was provided, from the fertile nature of his theme, for the free play of his imagination, he enjoyed the rare privilege of indulging, without question, that instinct for ultra-realism which ordinarily the "nace" feelings (as Mr. Chester Coote would say) of modern civilisation stigmatise as grotesque, and sternly require an artist to suppress.

The constant seeking after new methods, the persistent adoption of unconventional, or at least unusual, standpoints, which up to this point had marked all Heath Robinson's activities as an illustrator, may be taken as an indication of his very decided individuality. This is an artist who never has been, and does not desire to be, an illustrator in the strict sense of the word. He demands to go his own

way too much, unwilling to re-state literal facts pictorially, and providing rather an accompaniment to the author's text than an exposition of his meaning. One may hazard a guess that the authors for whose writings he has made drawings, no matter how great a source of delight he may have found the perusal of them in a private capacity, have proved to him, as an artist, a nuisance and a bore. Their writings furnish excuses for his pictures, but, except as pegs upon which to hang the latter, he would much prefer not to be hampered by them.

It must not be supposed, however, that his method, because not analytical, is therefore impertinent. His illustrations, even when most fanciful, justify themselves, and when the subjects selected demand fidelity to the author's description, their close adherence to the latter should satisfy the most exacting stickler. Many of the illustrations to "Twelfth Night" and Mr. Kipling's poems confirm this view, while also exhibiting the artist's habitual adoption of a very individual standpoint, and his tendency to choose subjects which permit of a general rather than a precise interpretation.

"RING, DRAW, REACH, FILL, AND MIXE"
Illustration from "RABELAIS"

By permission of Messrs. Alex. Moring Ltd.

"THEY FELL DOWN BEFORE HIM LIKE HAY BEFORE A MOWER"
Illustration from "RABELAIS"

By permission of Messrs. Alex. Moring Ltd.

Consequently, it is not surprising that Heath Robinson should have been encouraged to act as author to himself as illustrator. His first attempt in this direction was a nursery book entitled "Uncle Lubin," which enabled him, in his double rôle of author and illustrator, to indulge to the full his quaint turn of fancy. Further reference to "Uncle Lubin" is made elsewhere in the present volume; but it may be remarked here that, by giving its author a taste of freedom from the limitations which are imposed, even under the most generous conditions, upon the illustrator of another man's work, the little book played an important part in the development of Heath Robinson's peculiar artistic personality.

Incidentally, "Uncle Lubin," and the opening which it seemed to create for pure whimsicality, turned the artist's attention to the possibilities of humorous drawings. His first attempts in this direction achieved instant success, and though he did not at the immediate outset strike that distinctive vein of humour which has since become so inseparably associated with his name, it was not long before there began that long series of

pictorial absurdities in *The Sketch* and other illustrated papers which have attained a world-wide celebrity.

THE MER-BOY
From "Uncle Lubin"

FROM "THE POEMS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE"

By permission of Messrs. Geo. Bell & Sons Ltd.

A SIMPLE APPARATUS FOR RESCUING A WOUNDED SNIPE

By permission of the "Sketch"

WITHOUT doubt, Heath Robinson hoped that the quaint method of expression which he devised for his humorous fancy might meet with success. He may even have had faith in its acceptability. But it is certain that he never anticipated the enormous popularity which from the very first his comic drawings enjoyed. For though a leading feature of his peculiar vein of humour is the aspect of sober deliberation which his cartoons wear, the patient, almost laborious, elaboration of detail, and the careful solemnity with which the whole composition is grouped, this is not to indicate that the artist is merely an ingenious schemer, hatching a determined plot to raise a laugh. There is a spontaneity about Heath Robinson's humour which is not less real because it differs from that which inspires the exuberant outbursts of more volatile jesters. No matter how lengthy and painstaking the elaboration of any subject, the ultimate idea upon which it rests invariably proves to be simple, guileless, unpremeditated — in brief, a whim of the moment.

Whimsical is perhaps the nearest word to describe the distinctive note of Heath Robinson's humour. It has been said of Mr. J. M. Barrie, in explanation of the universal appeal made by certain of his qualities as a writer, that he possesses the unique gift of being able to commit to paper those whimsical fleeting notions which flit through the minds of all of us as we lie in that delicious half-conscious state betwixt sleeping and waking. Some such knack, perhaps, belongs to Heath Robinson ; at all events, it is seldom that the pure whimsicality of his notions fails to touch a responsive chord, or his unabashed exploitation of them to enlist a sympathetic attention.

If proof were wanted of the artist's humorous spontaneity, it could be found, by inference, in the complete failure of his many imitators. Attempted imitation is a thing from which all innovators must expect to suffer ; they are lucky when the new thing, as in the present case, is a product so individual as to defy successful imitation. Superficially the main features of Heath Robinson's humorous drawings look simple enough to copy : it is only when the attempt

THE NEW MAGNETIC LIFE-SAVING DEVICE AT WORK ON THE HIGH SEAS

By permission of the "Sketch"

is made that it becomes apparent how much is meant by the little more that makes the difference. Such a comparison lays interesting emphasis on the point of spontaneity; it becomes apparent with what genuine "feeling," albeit burlesqued, the artist has invested his ridiculous personages, thereby imparting to the most preposterous scene a quite convincing appearance.

The spontaneity of the artist's invention is supplemented by the deadly earnest of his application. He takes his folly so seriously, devotes such ungrudging attention to its exposition, that he builds up a plausibility which almost imposes on our credulity. It is a favourite trick of his humour to assume the utterly impossible as a normal circumstance, but he begs the question with an air so calm and matter-of-fact, and improvises therefrom such an entertaining sequence of events, that we blink the initial fallacy and are presently intrigued into denying, or at least ignoring, its existence, though it stares us in the face and we are privately quite aware of its enormity. Heath Robinson, in effect, explores for us some of the recesses in that magic cave of childhood, whereof the open-

PREPARING FOR XMAS

Training a Young Wait

Rough Sketch for Humorous Cartoon

sesame is "If!" He is the complete pictorial sophist, captivating us with the humour of his ingenious nonsense.

Although Heath Robinson's comic drawings depend, as was noted previously, largely upon the elaboration of their detail, his humour is seen at its best, perhaps, in simplest form. Such a drawing, for example, as the "New Magnetic Apparatus for Saving Life at Sea," which is reproduced opposite page 30, provides a very characteristic example of the artist's methods. The central idea is childish in its *naïveté*; so engagingly innocent and foolish that upon no one who has not most lamentably and irrevocably "grown up" can it fail to exercise a reminiscent appeal. And the idea is carried out with a deliciously childish gravity that makes the whole irresistibly convincing. If the artist were less persuaded, for the time being, of the entire plausibility—nay, the reality—of the whole business, the result would be very different. One slightest indication of his tongue being in his cheek and the fragile illusion would be broken. The picture would be dully, not enchantingly, stupid. As it is, one laughs with Heath Robinson, not

at him. Nobody dreams of jeering at a child.

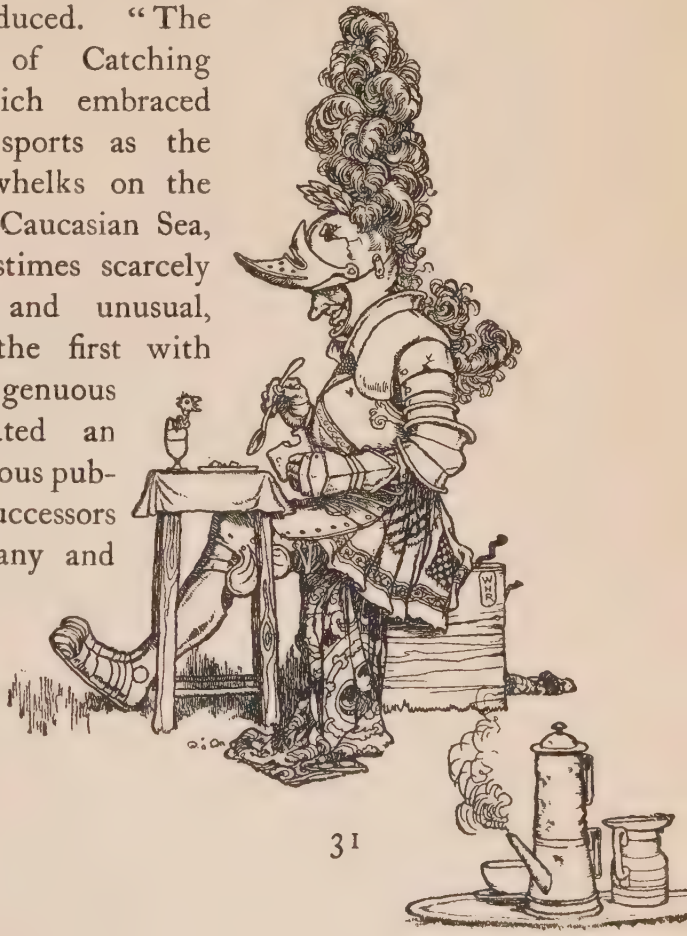
Incidentally, this drawing also exhibits, for all its simplicity, that instinct for decorative treatment and arrangement which is so marked a feature of all the artist's work. The same faculty for effective composition is still more pronounced in the drawing of a "Simple Apparatus for Rescuing a Wounded Snipe," which appears opposite page 25, and in "Landing an Anchovy at the Welsh Harp, Hendon," which faces page 8. These two pictures are good examples of that "much ado about nothing" which is a favourite plot with the artist, while the rescue apparatus further illustrates his knack, already mentioned, of conveying an air of great plausibility to the most egregious fallacies. The essential futility and impractibility of the apparatus is as nothing compared with the fascination of following out its details!

The "Remarkable Case of Absence of Mind in a Dutch Restaurant" (facing page 27) furnishes another excellent instance of almost pre-Raphaelite realism; while "Stiltonising Cheese in the Stockyards of Cheddar" (facing page 1) is perhaps the best remembered of

REMARKABLE CASE OF ABSENCE OF MIND IN A DUTCH RESTAURANT

By permission of the "Sketch"

the fantastic "British Industries" which Heath Robinson invented some time ago for the pages of *The Sketch.* It would be too lengthy a business to enumerate the many absurdities which were perpetrated under that general title, or even to catalogue the other series which the artist has from time to time produced. "The Gentle Art of Catching Things," which embraced such exotic sports as the trapping of whelks on the shores of the Caucasian Sea, and other pastimes scarcely less perilous and unusual, was one of the first with which the ingenuous artist captivated an equally ingenuous public, and its successors have been many and varied. One ought, perhaps, to mention specially the prophetic series of pic-



HORTICULTURAL NOTES: Testing Mistletoe for the Christmas Market.

GREAT BRITISH INDUSTRIES: In the Pea-Splitting Sheds of a Soup Factory.

The Pursuit of Science: Studying the Course of Halley's Comet.

The German Invasion: A Masked Raid on Yarmouth Beach

Rough Sketches for Humorous Cartoons

tures depicting incidents of the German Invasion of England, and the subsequent expulsion of the enemy by the Territorial Army—a series of genial satires upon invasion scares which the German papers were quick to reprint for the enjoyment of their readers.

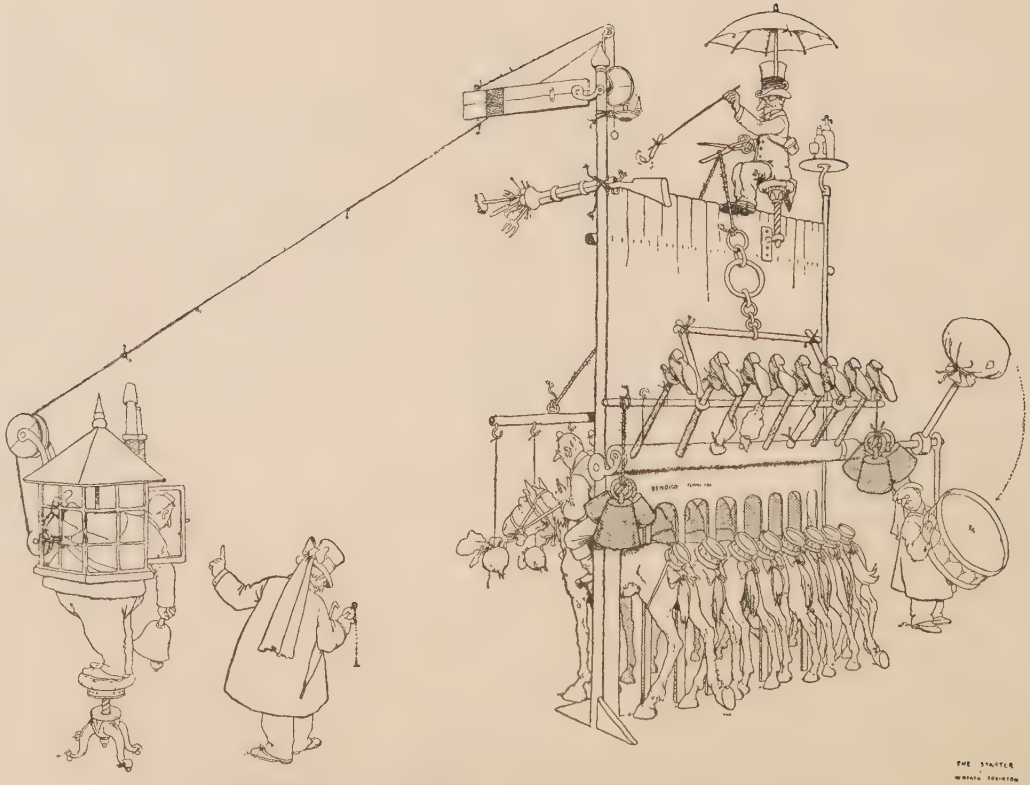
It may be here remarked that probably no other humorous artist has achieved a popularity so literally world-wide. In America one would expect to find especial appreciation of his art, and his work is, in fact, very well known and popular there. It was a drawing by Heath Robinson which won, some few years ago, the 250-dollar prize offered by *Life* for the best illustration of a quotation from Benjamin Franklin, "God helps them that help themselves"; and the familiarity of this artist's comic pictures to the American public can be gauged by the fact that one of them not long ago was adapted by a leading journal to the purpose of a political cartoon. Still more recently a "flying-ship" of the artist's invention made its appearance, admirably copied from the original illustration, in a winter carnival at Saranac Lake.

But Heath Robinson, as a humorist, has

"HE WOULD FALL INTO AN EXTASIE"

Illustration from "RABELAIS"

By permission of Messrs. Alex. Moring Ltd.



THE STARTING MACHINE FOR EPSOM UPS AND DOWNS

Sketch for Revue at Alhambra Theatre

achieved an European reputation. In France and Germany especially, the keenest delight appears to be taken in his humorous inventions. When the series of "Little Games for the Holidays" were appearing, a set of photographs showing an exciting game of "Bouncing the Beecham" in progress—every detail, down to the grostesque costumes of players and umpire, carefully copied from the inventor's published drawing—reached the artist from the Far East. Suggestions for pictures continually arrive from unknown correspondents, often in the most remote places: and if few of them are ever embodied in drawings, the reason is that, in the nature of things, a humorous impulse so peculiar as Heath Robinson's is hardly amenable to suggestions from outside.

Not the least attractive feature of the peculiar kind of humour of which Heath Robinson is the chief, if not the sole, exponent, is the wide range of its possibilities. It can be made the vehicle of satire, fierce or mild, as well as the expression of mere whimsicality. That it can be successfully adapted

ILLUSTRATION FROM HANS ANDERSEN'S TALES

By permission of Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.

to the purposes of the theatre was shown by the employment of the artist as designer of a racecourse scene in a "revue" at the Alhambra Theatre. Derby Day, or "Epsom Ups and Downs," as imagined by "Mr. Ascot Heath Robinson" is an event in which the fun is as fast and furiously wild as the most fantastically minded race-goer could desire. Whether the Jockey Club will finally decide to supersede the tapes of the old-fashioned starting-gate by the artist's ingeniously planned, up-to-date "starting machine" (of which the design is reproduced on p. 36) is still in doubt.

SILENCE

From "The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe"

By permission of Messrs. Geo. Bell & Sons Ltd.

"OH! WHEN MINE EYES DID SEE OLIVIA FIRST!"

From "TWELFTH NIGHT"

By permission of Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton.

From the original drawing in the possession of Mr. J. E. Hodder Williams

W. HEATH ROBINSON. IV.

THE remarkable success of Heath Robinson's humorous drawings caused a temporary cessation of his activities as an illustrator, though he found time in the midst of his comic inventions to adorn a whimsical story here and there for the magazines. His next important essay as a serious illustrator was a set of drawings in colour, forty in number, for an edition of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night," issued a year or two ago by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton. This was the artist's first public appearance in colour, and though the pictures comprising the long series varied in quality (in great part owing to the rather urgent haste in which they were completed), his reputation was greatly enhanced.

It was earlier mentioned that a literal interpretation of his author was never the guiding principle of Heath Robinson's illustrative method, and in these Shakespearean drawings he made little attempt to reconstruct the stage setting of the play. In many cases a single line from the play, or a couplet from one of the songs which it

contains, provided an excuse for a picture which, however charming in itself, had little direct reference to the subject-matter of the dramatist. A similar tendency, however, is to be noted in most recent book illustrations, and few will cavil at the licence which relieves an artist of any obligation to trench upon the province of the stage manager.

Two of the drawings for this "Twelfth Night" are reproduced as frontispiece to the present volume and opposite page 41, and serve to suggest the mood of fancy which inspired the artist. Another Shakespearean set of illustrations is in contemplation, to be carried out at the artist's leisure and pleasure, and in view of the great charm which his latest work in colour reveals, this will be awaited with lively interest.

After "Twelfth Night," Heath Robinson turned his attention to Mr. Rudyard Kipling, whose poem, "A Song of the English," he illustrated elaborately in colour and black-and-white, or perhaps one should say decorated, for apart from the artist's tendency to utilise his author's lines as a peg upon which to hang his own pictures, Kipling is a poet scarcely suited to Heath Robinson's tem-

THE SILVER LINING

By permission of the "Tatler"

ILLUSTRATION FROM "A SONG OF THE ENGLISH"

perament. This edition of "A Song of the English," notwithstanding, contained some notable work, both as regards the pictures in colour (of which one is reproduced opposite page 7), and the decorative panels in pen-and-ink. If in some respects the artist is not revealed by these drawings in his happiest mood, the explanation is to be found partly in the reason just alluded to, but still more in the necessity of forcing here and there an "illustration" to lines which scarcely afforded a motive for even a purely decorative panel.

Considering the severe limitations, the

"HEAVEN ENDUED ME WITH STRENGTH TO PUSH HIM DOWN A PRECIPICE"

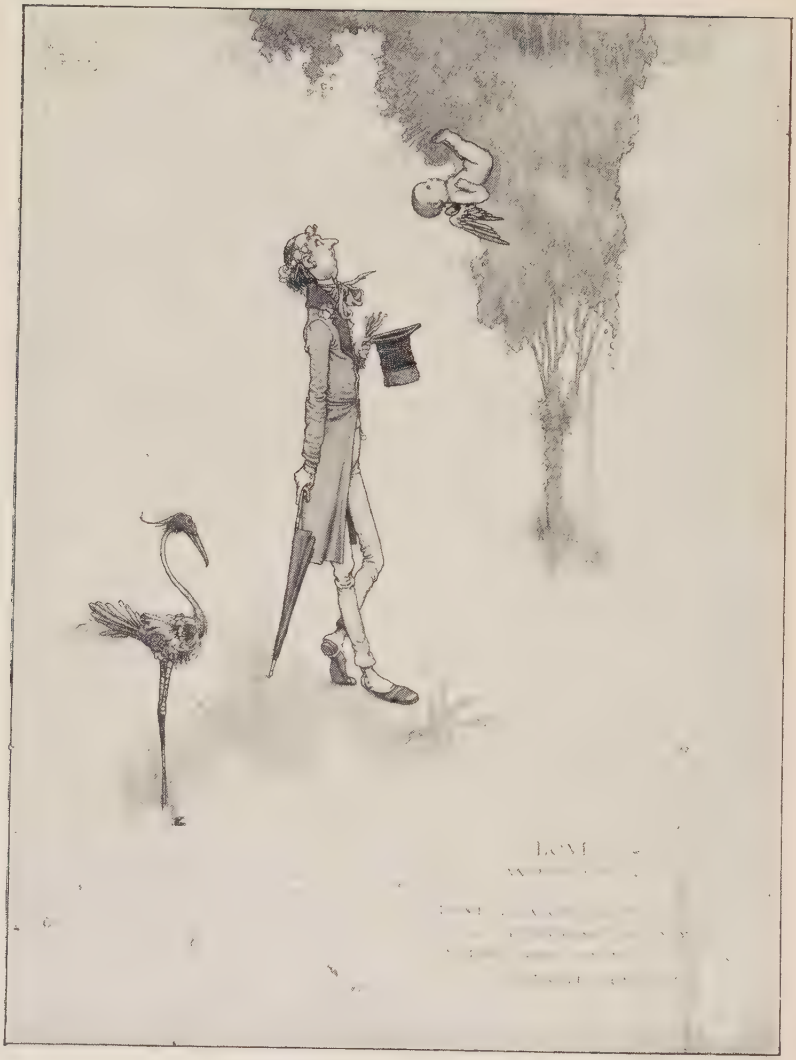
From "Don Quixote"

By permission of Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.

artist achieved his task with remarkable success ; at all events so acceptably that he was forthwith asked by Messrs. Doubleday, Page and Co., of New York, to undertake a series of illustrations for the American edition of Mr. Kipling's "Collected Verse." In this volume the far greater choice of subject gave the artist freer play, and some interesting work was the result. Of the pictures in colour, one illustrating the grimly humorous poem of "Tomlinson" will be found opposite page 10. The original of another picture in the same series, illustrating "The Three Decker," was recently bought by the Canadian National Gallery.

Reference has already been made to "Uncle Lubin," a little nursery book which Heath Robinson both wrote and illustrated. The pleasure which he derived from this modest venture into authorship and the delight of finding himself, as illustrator, entirely untrammelled by the necessity of having to adapt himself, however remotely, to an author's requirements, suggested a repetition of the experiment upon a larger scale. The project had to be nursed for a long time before an opportunity arose of putting it

into execution, but with "Bill the Minder," which was published in 1912 by Messrs. Constable, it was brought to triumphant fruition.



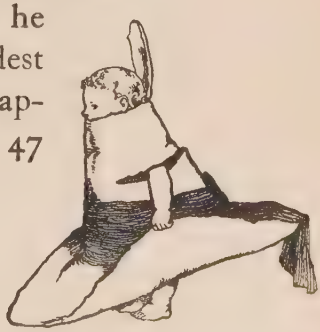
LOVE: WHAT IT IS

By permission of the "Sketch"

W. HEATH ROBINSON. V.

THERE have been several cases of writers who have acted as their own illustrators, but it is less common for artists to be their own authors. It is not often that the former combination has proved very satisfactory, and one would certainly expect the artist who undertakes the function of author to fare better, since moderate skill in the literary craft is easier to acquire than the same degree of proficiency in pictorial art.

Skill, however, has little to do with Heath Robinson's literary activities. If he were asked to write even the simplest of ordinary tales he would probably be dismayed. It is almost certain that he could not be persuaded to make the attempt. But stories of the fantastic kind which form themselves in his mind, as readily and numerously as the quaint conceits which his pencil depicts, he has no difficulty in committing to paper. In such a task he displays a literary style which is excellent, because perfectly natural and apt to the subject. Just as he has the knack of endowing his wildest pictorial flights of fancy with an ap-



pearance of almost convincing reality, so a tale from his pen, which in other hands would seem merely vapid and far-fetched, unfolds a narrative that engages the interests

despite, or perhaps because of, its manifold absurdities, and delights the reader by its artless *naïveté* and inconsequence. A tale by Heath Robinson is exactly what might be expected from the hand which draws his pictorial absurdities: hence his appeal as author is identical with his appeal as artist.

"Bill the Minder" is a series of short stories, complete in themselves, but making up together the tale of wonderful adventures which befell the hero Bill, famous as a "minder" of children. From the fact that the *dramatis personæ* include (to name a few only) a Respectable Gentleman, an Ancient Mariner, a Sicilian Char-woman, a Wild Man, a Lost Grocer, and a Real Soldier, it will be seen that opportunities for the fantastic are not lacking.

His earlier book, "Uncle Lubin," possesses the same peculiar charm, though conceived on a slighter and much less ambitious plan

"THE ANCIENT MARINER AND THE MER-BABY"
From "BILL THE MINDER"

By permission of Messrs. Constable & Co. Ltd.

A FAUN
Two-hour sketch, London Sketch Club.

than "Bill the Minder." The title-rôle is sustained by a quaint, almost grotesque, figure of fun who, nevertheless, for all his oddity, is a very real and human character. His oddity, in brief, is merely the oddity (somewhat exaggerated, of course) which many a grown-up wears in the searching eyes of unsophisticated childhood. And his marvellous adventures combine the fantastic and the prosaic, the supposititious and the real, in just that queer medley which is characteristic of childish imaginings. It is little wonder that children (as Mr. H. G. Wells remarks in one of his novels) regard "Uncle Lubin" as a rare good thing.

Comments have been made in these brief pages upon some of Heath Robinson's many and diverse activities; these, with the numerous examples of his work in different veins, will suggest the wide range of his abilities and the versatility which is not the least remarkable of his qualities. At the same time an endeavour has been made to show that this versatility is superficial rather than real, and that the same curious and engaging attitude of mind is to be discerned in all which the artist has

PAN

Illustration from "Rabelais"

By permission of Messrs. Alex. Moring Ltd.

produced. One expects to see in the future an advance in the technique of his art, but not an alteration in his *naif* and unsophisticated outlook. The peculiar quality of his imagination is at once the explanation of the distinctive features of his work and the secret of his irresistible appeal to the public at large. To wake up, in his case, would be not to find, but to lose, himself.

The fact is, Heath Robinson has never grown up. And for everybody's enjoyment, let us hope that he never will!

From "Uncle Lubin"

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